

Office of the Governor

PO BOX 004
TRENTON, NJ 08625

NEWS RELEASE

CONTACT: Jayne O'Connor
609-777-2600

RELEASE: May 19, 1999

Whitman Urges Committee to Pass Safe Guns Bill

Gov. Christie Whitman has called upon the members of the Senate Law and Public Safety Committee to support her Safe Guns initiative that would require trigger locks or "smart gun" technology on all handguns sold in the state. The legislation is scheduled to be considered by the committee tomorrow.

"We must act decisively to ensure that every gun sold in this state is equipped with a safety feature to protect our children," said Gov. Whitman. "Tragedies throughout the country serve as a sad reminder-and a jarring warning-that common-sense gun-safety measures are essential to protect all of the citizens of this state, particularly our children."

The Governor proposed in her State of the State address in January that all handguns sold in the state be equipped with a trigger locking device or be personalized handguns. Senate Bill No. 1857, which embodies the Governor's initiative, would take effect six months after its enactment. Failure to comply with the requirements of the bill would be punishable as fourth-degree offenses.

Gov. Whitman said that the value of trigger locks has been noted by gun manufacturers themselves, some of whom already have started to distribute trigger locks with each handgun sold.

"There simply is no good reason not to require that all guns sold be accompanied by this popular, affordable and effective safety device. The bottom line is that a trigger lock today can save a child's life-and that child could be yours or mine," said Gov. Whitman.

The Governor said that personalized handgun technology has great potential to enhance public safety, however, she said that she recognizes that effective and reliable "smart gun" technology has yet to be fully perfected or marketed.

"Trigger locks are available today and should be required today," she said.

According to Gov. Whitman, her Safe Guns initiative proposes the sensible course of offering handgun purchasers the option of buying a handgun equipped either with a readily-available trigger lock or the smart gun technology. She believes that this approach will encourage development of the technology, while ensuring that all guns sold are accompanied by a reliable safety device.

A copy of the Governor's letter to committee chairman Senator Louis Kosco (R-38) is attached. Similar letters were sent to all members of the committee.

